SHALL I BE A DAILY COMMUNICANT

"I AM THE LIFE"

Shall I Be
A Daily Communicant?

A Chat With Young People

By Rev. Francis Cassilly, S. J.

Author of "What Shall I Be?"

"Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread."
—Luke XI:3.

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What Shall I Be?

By the Rev. Francis Cassilly, S. J.

The Newest Booklet on Vocation.

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* * * *

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THE LOYOLA UNIVERSITY PRESS

TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE
THROUGHOUT THE WORLD
WHO IN GLAD RESPONSE
TO THE VOICE OF
CHRIST AND THE CHURCH
AND IN THE HOPE
THAT THEY MAY LIVE FOREVER
DAILY
PARTAKE OF THE LIVING BREAD
THAT COMETH DOWN FROM HEAVEN
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE

HEY who are wont to lend a willing ear to the direction and exhortation of the Church, will readily appreciate the object of this little book, which is to elucidate for the young the two decrees on frequent Communion, dated respectively the twentieth of December, 1905, and the eighth of August, 1910.

The later decree contains the words: "They who have care of children should make every effort that, after their first Communion, these children approach the Holy Table often and even daily, if it is possible, as Jesus Christ and Mother Church desire."

What seems implied in this passage, but that the Pope and the framers of the decree hoped to attain what lay so near their heart, the daily Communion of the young, mainly through the co-operation of priests, parents and teachers? And in fact it would seem quite evident, that the Pope's cherished desire in regard to the tenderest portion of his flock, can be fully brought home to them only through those who have immediate charge of them.

Beyond doubt, the decrees have met with a hearty response throughout the world; and yet no keen observation is required to perceive that, in many places, the number of youthful daily communicants might

with persevering effort be considerably increased; for while in some churches throngs of children are daily seen at the altar-rail, in others just as favorably situated, few or none are found between Sundays.

In view of this condition of affairs, there would seem, notwithstanding a number of previous publications, sufficient reason for this booklet, in the hope of its penetrating to some hitherto unreached quarter, especially as different writers will likely view the subject from varied angles. This opinion seems to find warrant, also, in the earnest exhortation of the earlier decree to wide-extended effort: "Let pastors, confessors and preachers, with much zeal and insistence, commend to Christians this so pious and salutary practice." The present treatment is intended to make appeal to a very definite circle of readers, those, namely, of school age, between ten or twelve and eighteen years; and it aims to benefit those who already receive daily, as well as those who have not yet taken up the practice.

If, then, this slight contribution aid, ever so little, priests or others in their work for the young; or awaken, here and there, in the hearts of youthful readers, a tenderer regard for their Eucharistic Lord and a more generous desire of His service, it will be its own ample reward.

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CHAPTER I

LISTENING

AWAY back in the olden time, let us say three thousand years ago, the boy Samuel, who had been ministering all day to the Lord, was deep in the sleep that only youth and innocence know. In the middle of the night, the silence that brooded over the Temple was broken by a call that roused the slumberer, who at once arose and, running to the old blind priest, Heli, said: "Here I am, for thou didst call me." Heli replied: "I did not call; go back and sleep."

Samuel returned to his couch, and, being again awakened, presented himself to the aged priest, who gave him the same answer as before. A third time he heard the voice, and Heli, perceiving that the Lord was calling the child, bade him: "Go and sleep, and if He shall call thee any more, thou shalt say: 'Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.'" A fourth time "the Lord came and stood," and called: "Samuel, Samuel." In obedience to instructions, the lad replied: "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

With bated breath, he listened in the solemn stillness and heard words that made his ears tingle, and if you wish to know what they were, you can read

them for yourself in the first Book of Kings (iii: 11). They do not concern us here, but what does concern us is the ready obedience of the youthful seer, which made him rise from his slumber and *run* to the priest at the supposed word of command. Are you always as eager as he, gentle reader, to *run* in obedience to the behest of your parents and superiors?

I fancy I hear someone say: "How pleased I should be to have God speak to me as He did to Samuel. Eagerly indeed should I do His bidding." Who knows but God shall call you some day? Or rather it were more correct to say that He has frequently spoken to you in the past, and will again do so in the future. "When or how?" you may exclaim, seeing that you have not yet reached to the exaltation of vision or ecstasy.

God needs not the medium of vision to manifest His will and desire to creatures. On the first Pentecost Sunday, when the Apostles rose to preach to a throng of Jews from many nations, Parthians, Medes and Elamites, inhabitants of Asia, Egypt and Rome, all were astonished to hear them speak in their own tongues. This "gift of tongues," as it is called, imparted to the speaker the power of using freely a language he had never learned (Acts ii). Nor was this gift confined only to the Apostles, but it has been communicated to many saints, as we read in the lives of St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent Ferrer and others.

The Creator also has a fashion of speaking to hearts without the aid of words, in a language all

His own, as when He gives us sorrow for sin or an impulse toward right doing or away from evil. Touches of grace that illumine our mind or inflame our heart are Divine whispers within the soul.

God also makes known His wishes to man by the voice of those in authority. He spoke to the children of Israel through Moses, their appointed leader. He speaks to the faithful through the bishops and priests of the Church, according to Christ's words: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke x: 16). Parents and superiors, too, are God's representatives, and He speaks to us by the words of their mouth. When we receive a lawful command, it matters not who utters it; we are just as sure that it proceeds from heaven as if we heard the rustle of the wings of the angel who brought the message.

CHAPTER II

A LETTER FROM HEAVEN

NOR is our heavenly Father content only with speaking to us directly or through the mouth of others. Having regard to our loneliness in exile, He occasionally sends us letters from home. When absent from those we love, what a pleasure it is to receive a letter from them, all for ourselves! How we gaze at the postmark, and scrutinize the well-known writing on the envelope before opening the letter, wondering meanwhile what delightful and mysterious message lies folded within! We hesitate to cut the wrapper and break the spell which holds us in such pleasant suspense.

Yes, we all like to receive letters, but who ever dreamed of getting one postmarked in heaven? Where is the postoffice that transmits such precious missives? The story is told of St. Bernardine of Sienna, a preacher of the Friars Minor, that while giving a mission in Bergamo very few came to his sermons. So one day, rising before his small audience, he said: "Tell all your friends and neighbors that I have a letter from heaven which is directed to the people of Bergamo, and next Sunday I will read and show it to you. I want everyone to come."

The mysterious letter became the talk of the town, expectation grew feverish, and the next Sunday an immense crowd gathered before the Saint to hear

the message from heaven. St. Bernardine had written out the part of the Apocalypse of St. John, referring to the Church of Pergamus (the Latin name of Bergamo), and fashioned it in the style of a letter with the seal of a scribe; and, slowly unfolding it before the wondering populace, he told them it had been inspired by the Holy Ghost and written by St. John to the Church of Bergamo.

The congregation listened breathlessly to the reading of the document, and, in the sequel, entering heartily into the spirit of the mission, finished it with great fervor. One may be inclined to smile at this successful ruse of the simple and ingenious saint, but, after all, he fulfilled his promise almost literally. For, what are the writings of Scripture, the epistles of St. Paul and the other Apostles but letters from heaven? They are inspired by the Holy Ghost, written at His dictation and sent to the faithful.

When the early Christians received these epistles, they regarded them as sacred, as communications from heaven, and, preserving them with veneration, handed them down to future ages bound in the pages of Holy Writ. And what can be said literally of the Holy Scripture can in due measure be affirmed of the encyclicals of the Pope, the pastorals of the Bishops, the writings of the Fathers of the Church, and in general of all spiritual books and treatises in so far as they are approved by Church authority. For, though not inspired, they are designed by God as a solace to us in exile, as instruction and salutary aids for us to reach heaven. They are real love missives sent us from above, had we only the keen faith to perceive it.

"I never looked at spiritual books in that light," one of my young readers may exclaim. "I always regarded the lives of saints and similar writings as dreary reading, suitable only to persons advanced in age and virtue, and not meant for the young. But styling them 'letters from home' and 'love missives from my heavenly Father' makes them appear in quite a different light."

CHAPTER III

A LETTER TO YOU

E SHOULD all like to get a letter from the Pope, because he is the father of all the faithful, and God's highest representative on earth, so that what he should ask us to do would be like a request from God Himself. But there is no hope, you may think, of the Pope ever writing to you. Now, what if I should tell you he has done so? Pius X, "the children's Pope," has sent two letters containing a special message of affection for the young, the first bearing date of the twentieth of December, 1905, and the second of the eighth of August, 1910—two days destined to be memorable in the roseate calendar of youth. And these letters are meant for you.

It is with the hope of interesting you in these missives of the Holy Father, of making you understand their great importance for this life and the next, and also appreciate God's tender love shown for you in them, that these pages are written.

The letter first published, called the "decree on frequent Communion," says: "Frequent and *daily* Communion, as a thing most earnestly desired by Christ Our Lord and by the Catholic Church, is to be open to all the faithful, of whatever class or condition; so that no one who is in the state of

grace, and approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can be excluded therefrom."

The other decree, on the age of first Communion, contains the injunction: "They who have care of children should make every effort that, after their first Communion, these children approach the Holy Table often and even *daily,* if it is possible, as Jesus Christ and Mother Church desire, and that they do it with a devotion becoming their age."

The earlier decree also contains the passage: "Frequent and *daily* Communion is to be promoted especially in Christian institutions of every kind for the training of youth."

These brief extracts show clearly and unmistakably the Pope's wish, and consequently God's wish in this matter. They do not convey a command or an order, but a pressing invitation from God's Vicar on earth, exhorting all Christians to frequent and daily Communion, and especially urging parents, pastors, confessors and teachers to promote this practice among the young committed to their care.

Should anyone object that these letters are directed, not to youthful readers, but to their superiors, we must remember that we judge for whom a letter is meant more by its content than its address. And that the Pope had the young directly in mind is apparent, since without their co-operation his wishes could not be carried out.

Now, my dear young friend, if father or mother ask a favor of you, you are only too eager to grant it. And when God, your heavenly Father, makes known

His good pleasure to you, through a letter of the Pope, will you be less quick and ready to comply? You, no doubt, profess yourself a dutiful child of God and Mother Church. Here is an opportunity to test your earnestness and good will. You are not asked to perform some heroic or arduous task, but each morning, when rosy dawn is painting the eastern sky, to come to the embraces of your Lord.

Hundreds of thousands of loyal, true-hearted young people throughout the world have read these letters from heaven, and, as a result, are to-day fervent daily communicants. Will not you, too, join this chosen band of God's little saints on earth? Nothing that you could do would please Him more. "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet" (Ps. xxxiii: 9). Come and learn how true are the words: "I will go in to the altar of God; to God Who giveth joy to my youth" (Ps. xlii: 4).

CHAPTER IV

THE MANNA

HE letter on frequent Communion quotes the words of Our Lord: "This is the bread that came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John vi:59). Here Christ makes reference to the manna, that striking type of the Eucharist in the Old Law.

Moses having led the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt, they found themselves, a host of millions, in a desert land without food. Lacking confidence in the God who had repeatedly set nature's laws at naught on their behalf, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, saying: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat over the flesh pots and ate bread to the full. Why have you brought us into this desert, that you might destroy all the multitude with famine?" (Exod. xvi:3).

And the Lord, having regard to their distress, said to Moses: "Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you." And on the morrow, when the people rose, "a dew lay round about the camp," appearing like frost glistening upon the ground, and white like coriander seed. The children of Israel, seeing this marvel, cried out: "Manhu!" which means "What is

this?" And Moses replied: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." And, gathering it, they ate it, and the taste was like flour mingled with honey.

Every morning during the forty years of wandering in the desert, the "manna," as the people of Israel continued to call it, appeared mysteriously upon the ground, and was gathered fresh in baskets and pails to serve as food for the day, only that on Friday a double portion was collected to last over the Sabbath, when none was to be found in the fields. And what was not gathered melted away in the heat of the rising sun.

Not only did this miraculous bread give all necessary sustenance to the body, keeping it healthy and strong, but, according to the tradition preserved in the Book of Wisdom, its taste varied to suit the appetite of each. To quote the words of the Wise Man: "Thou didst feed Thy people with the food of angels, and gavest them bread from heaven prepared without labor; having in it all that is delicious, and the sweetness of every taste. For Thy sustenance showed Thy sweetness to Thy children, and serving every man's will, it was turned to what every man liked" (Wisdom xvi: 20-21). Whoever then desired to partake of a meal of fresh meat or vegetables, fruit or pastry, had only to make his wish, and the manna immediately assumed the savor of the dish he craved.

Was not God a most bountiful provider for the people He loved, thus to spread for them every day a breakfast under the open sky, without all the labor

of plowing, and sowing, and reaping? "And why," someone may ask, "does He not treat us Christians as He did the Israelites of old? Does he love us less? And do we not equally with them need a sustenance from above to enable us to travel through the desert of this life, amidst the famine of sin and temptation, to the promised land of heaven?"

The manna, my young friends, is still with us; the true Bread from heaven, which descends daily upon the altar stone at the Consecration of the Mass. He who rises before the sun to bless God and comes to adore Him "at the dawning of the light" (Wis. xvi:28), will find a banquet ready spread and far excelling the repast prepared for God's people in the desert, since all who ate the manna are dead, but they who partake of the Eucharistic Bread will live forever.

Come, then, and buy without silver or gold; take your place at this table replete with delights, and containing any spiritual flavor you seek—sweetness, courage or light, as well as heavenly nourishment which will preserve you unto life everlasting.

CHAPTER V

SUPPING ON THE HILLSIDE

ON A golden afternoon in April, Jesus, the great wonder-worker, sat with His disciples on a mountain that rose from the eastern shore of the sea of Galilee. A soft carpet of vivid green spread beneath them, extending far down to the glancing waters that lapped lazily on the beach, and overhead white masses of cloud floated in the pale blue sky. It was a dream day of spring, but the vast throng that pressed about the Master saw none of nature's beauties strewn profusely in cloud and wave and shrub—they had eyes and ears only for Him and His marvelous words and deeds. Why indeed should they allow themselves to be wooed by nature's charms away from nature's God?

All day had Christ taught and labored, and now that the shadows of evening were beginning to fall, the disciples, taking concern for the multitude, came to Jesus and asked Him to dismiss His hearers, that they might go into the neighboring villages and towns to buy themselves food. But Jesus would not send them away hungry and faint, and so he questioned Philip: "Whence shall we buy bread?" Philip answered: "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that everyone may take a little" (John vi:7).

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, thereupon ventured to remark: "There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many?" Straightway Jesus said: "Make the men sit down." And the vast crowd of five thousand men, not counting the women and children, sat upon the grass, in expectation of what was to come, wondering, no doubt, how, without provisions, they were to sup on the mountain-side.

Jesus then took the loaves, and when He had given thanks, distributed them. In like manner also were the fishes served. What a scene this to frame in the memory, this supper by the lake! How glorious a theme for angelic brush or pencil! The multitude lifted above the waters and clinging to the verdant mountain-side, Jesus in their midst as One Who served; above, the canopy of heaven, and the rays of the setting sun touching all with a golden benediction.

When all had eaten as much as they would, Christ bade His disciples: "Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost." And twelve baskets were filled with the remnants of the five loaves and two fishes, after the thousands had dined on them.

Supper being done, the crowd dispersed to their homes, and the Divine Missionary withdrew to a retired spot to pray. The ulterior purpose He had in view in the multiplication of the loaves He did not broach until the next day, when He said to His followers: "Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. . . . I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this

Bread, he shall live forever; and the Bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world." At this the Jews murmured, saying: "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" But Jesus only insisted the more: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi).

Relying on the miraculous multiplication of the loaves as testimony to the divinity of His mission, He here plainly foretells the institution and multiplication of the Eucharistic Bread, the true living Bread, His own body and blood, which was to give life to the world. Though many of His hearers refused to believe that He could give them His body to eat and, rejecting His doctrine as a hard saying, "went back and walked no more with Him," we Christians have the great privilege of knowing and believing that His promise gave place to fulfillment at the Last Supper.

We are more favored also than they who were filled with the barley loaves, for we have partaken often of the true living Bread, Christ's body, and thereupon found our hope, as "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v: 30), that He will abide in us and we in Him, and that living by Him we shall never die.

And God grant that so it may be.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAST SUPPER

UST a year after the multiplication of the loaves, the time came for Jesus to fulfill His promise of giving His disciples "living Bread from heaven." The feast of the Pasch had arrived and the disciples asked Jesus where they were to keep it. He sends two of them, saying: "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water; follow him, and whithersoever he shall go in, say to the master of the house: 'Where is My refectory, where I may eat the Pasch with My disciples?' And he will show you a large dining-room furnished; and there prepare ye for us" (Mark xiv: 13-15).

The disciples, doing His bidding, met the man with the pitcher, and, following him, entered the house and prepared the supper. They obtained the yearling lamb without blemish, roasted it at the fire, and set the table with wild lettuce, wine mixed with water, and unleavened bread, which was bread made without yeast. This ceremony was in memory of the "Phase" or passage of the Lord, when he passed over the homes of the Israelites and slew the first-born of the Egyptians, thus forcing them to let the chosen people depart from Egypt.

It was also typical of the true Paschal Lamb, Our Lord Himself, Who was to be slain the next day to

free the human race from the bondage of sin and death. Sitting at the table with the twelve disciples, Jesus said: "With desire I have desired to eat this pasch with you, before I suffer." And the reason for this consuming desire of Christ was that the typical Paschal Lamb was about to be succeeded by the immolation of the true "Lamb of God," and the Eucharist, the Pasch of the New Law, was to be instituted as a perpetual memory of Christ and His passion.

The legal supper having been eaten, "Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke, and gave to His disciples, and said: 'Take ye and eat. This is My Body.' And, taking the chalice, He gave thanks, and gave to them, saying: 'Drink ye all of this. For this is My Blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins'" (Matt. xxvi: 26-28). St. Luke adds Christ's injunction: "Do this for a commemoration of Me."

And with these simple words, the Eucharist was instituted, ever to remain with the Church until the end of time. And the Apostles had made their first Communion, all in the state of grace, save Judas, who, if he had not already left the supper-room, added to his intended crime of treason the sacrilege of a bad first Communion.

And from that day, Christ, body and blood, soul and Divinity, has dwelt with His Church on earth. Daily, from the rising of the sun to its setting, He descends upon the altar, ready to enter into the bosom of all Christians who desire to receive Him. At the Consecration of the Mass the bread is changed into the Body of Christ, the same Christ Who trod

the hills of Galilee, Who hung upon the Cross, and now sits at the right hand of His Father in heaven. The dead bread becomes "Living Bread," to make our souls live and tingle with the life of grace.

Always, in every Catholic church or chapel throughout the world, wherever the little red light burns before the Tabernacle, you can find your truest friend, Jesus, waiting, longing for you to come and converse with Him, to tell Him your joys and sorrows, to exchange sweetest confidences of love. Without the church or chapel, is the mad bustle of the world or perhaps the silence of darkness and night; within the Tabernacle, quiet, still, but living with intensest life and power, is One Who never sleeps, Who ever watches, guards and cherishes those whom He loves.

CHAPTER VII

THE WISH OF THE CHURCH

HEN Mother Church expresses a wish or a command, it is for her dutiful children to take a just pride in showing their devotion and loyalty by a generous compliance with her desire. Now, the most solemn deliberative body of the Church is an ecumenical council, in which the bishops of all the world gather with the Pope or his representative to consult about the interests of religion. Amongst the decrees of the Ecumenical Council of Trent we find: "The holy Synod would indeed desire that at every Mass the faithful who are present should communicate, not only spiritually, but also by the sacramental reception of the Eucharist" (Sess. 22: cap. 6).

As the Holy Mysteries are celebrated daily in our churches, with doors invitingly open for all to enter, it is quite evident that the Fathers of Trent would rejoice to see daily Communion practiced by the faithful at large.

We know, too, that the early Christians understood daily Communion to be the wish of Christ and the Church; as we are told in the Acts (ii: 42), that "they were persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles and the communication of the breaking of bread"—the expression "breaking of bread" being the

Scriptural term used for the Eucharist, in reference to Christ's action at the Last Supper. The holy Fathers of the Church and ecclesiastical writers also testify to the existence of the same practice in the first ages of Christianity.

How little many well-meaning Catholics of our day appreciate this earnest desire of the Church, as manifested in its teaching and the practice of early days, is evident from the comparatively small attendance at week-day Masses of those who could be present with but little inconvenience. And even of those who attend daily Mass, many refrain from approaching the Communion-rail, and that from motives insufficient, if they only knew it, to exclude them from this privilege.

Hearken, then, my young friends, to the voice of Mother Church; begin in youth the practice of daily Communion, which will make you dear to the Heart of Jesus and sprinkle your lives with the fragrant odors of Paradise.

CHAPTER VIII

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

NO CHRISTIAN is so poorly instructed as to be ignorant of the "Our Father," which we all learn at our mother's knee, and which the Apostles learned from the lips of Christ Himself. One of the petitions we make in it is, "Give us this day our daily bread."

Even a child can understand what this means, for every day the domestic board is spread and all the children of the family gather at it, to partake of the repast bounteously laid before them by their parents. In fact, children do not have to be taught how to make this petition, for before learning to talk they have very forcible ways of letting their parents know they are hungry.

Even saints need their daily bread. A pretty story in this connection is told in the annals of the Dominican Order, which was founded at the beginning of the thirteenth century. One day two of the friars having returned without alms from their begging quest, there was nothing in the larder for dinner. Father Dominic, however, had the signal given as usual, and all the brethren assembled in the refectory and said grace. Suddenly two beautiful young men appeared, carrying delicious loaves in white cloths that hung from their shoulders, and beginning at the lowest

tables, they served each friar one whole loaf, coming last to the blessed Dominic. Then they bowed and disappeared. Not a word was spoken, and none ventured to ask the visitors who they were nor whence they came, for deep in his heart each friar knew they were ministering angels sent from above. In silence and with grateful hearts the bread from heaven was eaten, and for three days its remnants plentifully supplied the community.

We pray then for our daily bread, but the Pope tells us: "The holy Fathers of the Church all but unanimously teach that by this petition must be understood, not so much the material bread which is the food of the body, as the Eucharistic Bread, which ought to be our daily food."

Did we ever think of that before? Of course, we may pray for our temporal needs, but not with disquietude, remembering the words of Christ, "Be not solicitous therefore, saying, 'what shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink?' or 'wherewith shall we be clothed?' . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matt. vi: 31-32). Ask, then, for your daily material bread, but do not forget to include also the sacramental food.

Here the question may suggest itself, why Our Lord instituted the Eucharist under the form of bread. Why, for instance, did He not choose the element of flesh meat, which might be deemed a more natural symbol of His body, as well as indicative of the strength concealed in the Sacrament? No doubt Infinite Wisdom saw many reasons for this preference of bread; and one in particular seems apparent without very deep reflection.

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD"

Bread is the ordinary daily sustenance of man. The climates of the world differ widely in their products and, as a result, the edibles and the table fare of different countries and localities are quite dissimilar. But of all articles of diet, that which approaches nearest to universality, and, where used, to being the daily support of life, is bread of wheaten flour.

Herein, then, seems to lurk one reason why Christ made choice of bread for the matter of this Sacrament, in preference to rarer and more exquisite viands, which at first sight might appear more appropriate to its supreme excellence, namely, that as bread is the daily food of the body, so the Eucharist is intended to be the daily nourishment of the soul.

CHAPTER IX

EFFECTS OF THE EUCHARIST

IF, BY the exercise of a lively imagination, we were to suppose the offer of an earthly recompense, say a goodly sum of money, to all who received Communion, the probability is, the capacity of the churches would be taxed to hold the crowds that would flock to them, neither rain, snow nor zero weather being able to cool their suddenly-conceived and ardent fervor. Yet, sooth to tell, there is such a promise of bounteous reward for each worthy Communion, only it is payable not in the vile metal of earth, but in coin that is current in heaven. We know that our reward in the next life will be directly proportioned to the grace we store up in our souls during our earthly life; and to increase sanctifying grace in the recipient is the first and primary effect of the Eucharist.

Besides, there are many other effects of this Sacrament, the Council of Trent styling it "the antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins." Is it not a wondrous thing to be preserved from the death of sin? In the garden of Paradise grew the marvelous tree of life, whose property was to dower with immortality the bodies of those who ate of its fruit; but when sin came into the world it blasted this tree, root and branch, so that it will never grow again. The Eucharist, however, has in a sense taken its place, being a veritable tree of life with power to save the

soul from disease and endow it with vitality superior to death and time.

Mortal sin! Can anything be more bitter to the repentant sinner than to revert to the hour, when death-dealing sin first invaded his soul, and casting out heaven's light, plunged it into the horrors of guilt and remorse?

But why this first mortal sin, and the viper brood that perhaps followed it? Could it not have been prevented? Listen to the words of the Pope: "It happened that the innocence of childhood, torn away from the embrace of Christ, was nourished by no sap of the interior life; from which this also followed, that youth, deprived of a strong defense and surrounded by so many snares, lost its candor and rushed into vice before tasting of the holy mysteries." In the opinion, then, of the Pope, early Communion, at the dawn of reason, after the sixth birthday and before seven years of age, repeated frequently, even daily if possible, will be a bulwark of defense to the child against the invasion of grievous sin.

But to ward off death from the soul is not the sole medicinal effect of the Eucharist; it cures from a long train of minor diseases that are ever seeking to find lodgment in it. The just man is subject to many venial lapses that take their origin in the darkness of his intellect and the weakness of his will, and which consist in the rebellion of his passions against the dictates of reason. There is the movement of impatience, the sharp retort, the self-will, the uncharitable criticism, the negligent watch over the senses, and the yielding to softness and ease—all these ever lurk in the daily path of the virtuous.

These minor faults and defects, from which fallen man can scarce ever hope to be entirely free, the Sacrament of love cleanses for the past and prevents for the future, in proportion to the fervor and earnestness of the communicant. And even the temporal punishment, due to sins already forgiven, is also burnt away according to the intensity of the fire of charity which is made to glow in the soul.

Here we may remark for the encouragement and solace of the timid and scrupulous, what divines tell us, namely, that if a person, who is in mortal sin, should, without adverting to this fact and with attrition only for his sin, approach the Holy Table, it will be forgiven. So that he who unintentionally received in the guilt of mortal sin, will become a friend of God and pleasing to Him—though, of course, not exempt from the obligation of confessing such a sin, should he afterwards become aware of it.*

Concupiscence, too, the source of man's most frequent falls, is also gradually allayed by frequent and fervent Communion. Fire will overcome fire, and the flames of passion must needs be tempered by the burning heat of charity; and thus being gradually freed from grosser temptation, the frequent communicant will be able to devote himself with greater ardor to the service of God.

But are there any other effects of the Body of

"St. Thomas (Summa, 3a pars, quaest. 79, art. 3) thus expresses this teaching: "This Sacrament can work remission of sin. . . . when received by one who is in mortal sin of which he is not conscious and to which he is not attached; for perhaps at first he was not sufficiently contrite, but receiving with devotion and reverence he will obtain through this Sacrament the grace of charity, which will perfect contrition and the remission of sin."

Christ upon the body of the communicant? The Angelic Doctor tells us how grace overflows even to the body, and imparts to it a capacity for a glorious resurrection; and the Eucharist is the great source of grace. According to the theologians, it so regulates the body as to bring it into restraint, preserving its purity, dominating its passions, and making it worthy of future glory.

And will anyone call this into question, when he sees the depths of purity glancing from the clear eye of the young communicant, the serene radiance that lights up his countenance, and the self-control that invests his movements with an incomparable charm, making him seem almost like an angel flitted from Paradise? Nor does this comparison seem so far-fetched, when we recollect that man was originally created but "a little less than the angels" (Ps. viii:6), and that the young and innocent daily communicant, if anyone, can be said to approach nearest the state of original justice.

To sum up, then, the effects of the Eucharist, it preserves the soul from the sin that kills, removes venial faults and diminishes their number for the future, giving, oh! so exquisite a delicacy of conscience, purges away the remnants of temporal punishment, infuses an overpowering flood of grace which will be title to unending reward, and, reacting on the body, purifies it and prepares it for a glorious resurrection, casting around it, even in this life, a beauty and bloom anticipatory of the glory to come.

Will any generous heart, considering these marvelous effects, let even one morning of his life pass without feasting on the Divine Honey at the Royal Table?

CHAPTER X

CLAD IN THE WEDDING GARMENT

THE Holy Congregation of the Council is kind enough to lay down the requisites for frequent worthy Communion in the words before quoted: "So that no one who is in the state of grace, and approaches the Holy Table with a right and devout intention, can be excluded therefrom."

We note that only two conditions are laid down—the state of grace, and a right and devout intention. Leaving the latter for the next chapter, we may here ask ourselves what is required to be in the state of grace. Every baptized person who has never committed a mortal sin, or who, if he has had the misfortune to do so, has repented of it and made a good confession, is in the state of grace.

No Christian, who realizes the nature and sanctity of the Sacrament, could think of receiving the Body of Christ while in grievous sin, for St. Paul tells us: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Body of the Lord" (I Cor. xi: 29). To receive in mortal sin would be to give a traitor's kiss to Our Divine Friend, to open our dwelling to Him in pretended hospitality, while cherishing deadly hate against Him in our inmost heart. Hence the advice

of the Apostle to "prove" ourselves, meaning thereby to examine ourselves beforehand, and, if we find grievous stain upon our conscience, to purge it away by confession before "eating of that Bread."

When the King in the parable made a marriage feast for his son, and going in to see the guests found a man without a wedding garment, we remember that he said to the waiters: "Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness" (Matt. xxii: 13). Holy Communion is the marriage feast of God with our soul, and unhappy we if we come to it without the wedding garb of grace. In this mystic espousal we may be said to resemble some of the great saints, as St. Catherine of Sienna, to whom Christ appeared in vision, espousing her with a ring set with pearls and a rich diamond, and as an abiding token of the nuptials, He made the ring, unseen by others, ever visible to her own eyes.

Earnest boys and girls, who have the desire of communicating frequently, are sometimes deterred from doing so by the fear of being in mortal sin. Having very delicate consciences, they are so distressed by every fault that they fear it may make their Communion unworthy. Young people of this stamp should know that it is not so easy for one who truly fears God to sin mortally, since mortal sin requires grievous matter, full knowledge and deliberate consent.

Hence the brusque or pettish word, an unkind conversation, slight disobedience and laziness, a show of temper, a lie of excuse, and even impure thoughts or temptations, brought on through carelessness, if fought against and not fully consented

to or indulged in, must be ranked only as venial faults which are insufficient to keep us from Communion. They are specks on the shining mirror of the soul, and when Jesus comes, He will take pleasure in polishing them away.

This explanation is given, not to belittle the commission of venial sin, but to encourage the practice of frequent Communion. And it is in full accord with the decree, which says: "Although it be highly expedient for those who practice frequent and daily Communion to be free from venial sins, at least those which are fully deliberate, and from affection to them; still it is sufficient that they are free from mortal sins and have the resolve of never sinning (grievously) in future; by which sincere determination of mind, it cannot but happen that communicating daily they will gradually emancipate themselves also from venial faults and affection to them."

Young communicants then should have a great horror of venial sin, especially when fully deliberate, as it is the greatest evil in the world next to mortal sin; though this aversion should not lead them to abstain from Communion, but rather to approach often in the hope of getting grace and help to overcome their faults. In the revelations of St. Gertrude, who lived in Saxony, during the latter half of the thirteenth century, we read that a certain person blamed those, who, she thought, approached the Holy Table with too little preparation, and thus she rendered them so fearful that they remained away from Communion. Our Lord was so displeased with this rigorous view that He complained to the saint: "All who, by their words or persuasions, drive away those who are not in mortal sin, and thus hinder and interrupt the delight

which I find in them act like a severe master, who forbids the children of the king to speak to those of their own age who may be poor or beneath them in rank, because he considers it more correct that his pupils should receive the honor due to their dignity than to permit them this enjoyment."

But there is still one teasing thought, which is exceedingly distressing to fervent hearts, namely, uncertainty. "I am not sure," they say, "perhaps the matter was serious, or perhaps I gave consent to a grievous temptation." Such timorous souls should take heart of grace, remembering that it is as impossible for one who is trying to lead a sincere and devout life, to commit a mortal sin without knowing it, as it would be to fall into an icy pool and not feel the chill. A fast and habitual friend of God cannot turn his back on Him, and desert to the enemy, without intending and knowing it.

"But I cannot take the risk of offending God by a sacrilegious Communion," an over-cautious person may insist. You take no risk whatever when you are not certain or fully conscious of having sinned mortally, for a really doubtful sin cannot impose a certain obligation to abstain. It is sufficient for a person in these circumstances to make an act of contrition or even attrition, and then approach the Holy Table with all devotion and confidence.

If this explanation does not satisfy you, and your timidity still remains, expose your difficulty to a prudent confessor, and if he advises you to disregard unwarranted hesitancy and doubt, and you refuse to abide by his counsel, you will deliberately deprive yourself by your obstinacy of closer union and intimacy with Jesus in the Eucharist.

CHAPTER XI

A RIGHT INTENTION

CCORDING to the decree, we must also have a right intention in receiving Communion; and as an explanation is there given of this right intention, we are fortunately not left to guess at its meaning. "A right intention," says the decree, "consists in this, that he who approaches the Holy Table does so not through routine or vanity or human respect, but out of a desire to please God, to be more closely united to Him in charity and to apply that Divine remedy to his infirmities and defects."

Here we observe that the motives mentioned as good and salutary, are in agreement with the object and purport of this Sacrament as laid down by theologians, who tell us its effect is to give an increase of sanctifying grace, which in turn unites us more closely to God, renders us more pleasing to Him, and accompanied by actual graces enables us to rise superior to human frailties and defects.

If then we purpose in Communion to do what Christ intended in the institution of this Sacrament, our motive is supernatural and laudable. Nor is it necessary to recall explicitly and separately all the ends intended by Christ, an implicit intention being sufficient, provided one has some definite supernatural motive,

such as to please God, to acquire merit or an increase of grace, or to overcome his faults.

In fact, even the desire to obtain some temporal favor, such as restoration to health, success in study or the securing of employment, which may lead one to frequent Communion, is not an unbecoming or unworthy extrinsic motive, provided the recipient is fervent and intends to please God. For after all, one of the purposes Providence has in view in allowing us to suffer hardship and distress, is to force us to have recourse to Him in prayer and the sacraments, and thus draw us closer to Him, and supernaturalize our lives and actions.

Mere natural or human motives, however, to the exclusion of the supernatural, are not sufficient to justify frequent Communion. To receive solely through habit or custom or because others do so, without any effort to excite within ourselves a proper appreciation of the Sacrament and a becoming fervor, would be reprehensible. This of course does not mean that the habit of frequent Communion is wrong. Indeed, it is this very habit that we are bid to acquire. But habit merging into routine, dull and cold, and void of love and devotion, merits rebuke.

For a clearer understanding of the matter, we may add that in this, as in most good actions, mixed motives may prevail. One who attends Mass on Sunday to fulfill the precept of the Church, and at the same time takes advantage of this opportunity to display a new suit or hat, performs a good and meritorious work, though marring its excellence by his vanity. Thus an action may at the same time be partly good and partly bad, when namely it springs from both good and evil

motives, and it will be chiefly good or bad, according to the nature of the principal motive which prompts it.

From this we gather that mere routine or habit of itself does not make a Communion sacrilegious, since it does not exclude the ends intended by Christ; but the lack of due reverence and attention implied in it certainly impedes to a great extent the effects of the Sacrament.

What then is a person to do, who feels cold and sluggish at Communion, and fears that he is communicating merely from routine or human respect—remain away? That would certainly be an unfortunate remedy. Does one who is chilled stay away from the fire? Would it not be better for one who lacks fervor to stir up the dormant embers of charity within his soul, purify his motives, and excite himself by prayer and reflection to a lively appreciation of the benefits of Communion? Let him do this, and at the same time stifle or pay no heed to the promptings of inferior motives.

Whoever then receives Communion out of any supernatural motive, intending in general what Christ purposed in this Sacrament, and at the same time overcomes or rejects imperfect motives, need have no fear of becoming a daily communicant. The Sacrament of itself and by its own power, will gradually work the purification of his heart, and render him daily more and more worthy of its reception.

CHAPTER XII

BEFORE THE FEAST

HOW should we prepare ourselves before Communion? The decree tells us: "Since the sacraments of the New Law produce a greater effect in proportion to the better disposition of the recipient, care must therefore be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by diligent preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties."

When a king or bishop or other person of prominence and distinction is to pay a visit, the host is solicitous for days or weeks beforehand to clean and adorn his house, to prepare the guest chamber, and do all in his power to show his hospitality. The fervent communicant will surely not do less to make ready his soul and beautify it with all virtues, in preparation of the visit from his Eucharistic God.

St. Aloysius is said to have spent all his time between Communions, partly in thanksgiving for the last and partly in anticipation of the next. "Were I to spend a hundred years in preparation," said another saint, "I should never be ready, seeing that I have absolutely nothing of my own which could serve, however inadequately, as a fitting preparation for so great a Sacrament."

There is first of all the remote disposition of the soul, which consists in leading a good Christian life, devoted to home and school duties, and free from dissipation and worldliness. Industry, docility and self-control must ever be the watchword of Christian youth.

Granted that the young communicant is leading an industrious and well-tempered life, boyish if you will, but at least earnest, he will desire to know what sort of immediate preparation is expected of him. God is not so exacting in His demands as men often are, and having regard to the undevelopment of young people and their inaptitude for lengthy prayer, He will be satisfied with very little, provided that little is fervent and from the heart.

The sincere communicant, before retiring on the eve of a Communion day, will call to mind the great event of the early morrow, and briefly examining his conscience, excite himself to sorrow for his faults, and then call upon his special patron saints to assist him in making ardent acts of love and desire. On rising he should occupy himself with the great action he is to perform, and on the way to church try to keep the thought of it before him.

Beyond a doubt, however, the best possible immediate preparation for Communion, is to assist devoutly at the Mass at which one receives; and any young person who does this, can practically be said to have done all that is required of him. The Mass is the great Eucharistic Sacrifice, commemorative of Our Lord's death and passion, and through it His merits are applied to our souls. The priest's Communion is an

integral part of the Sacrifice, and, according to the Council of Trent, when the faithful receive, they obtain greater fruit from the Sacrifice. (Sess. 22 : c. 6.)

All the prayers used by the priest at Mass are admirably chosen to prepare priest and people for the proper reception of the Sacrament. In fact, these prayers are a compendium of Catholic doctrine, and a very complete expression of the needs and wants of the soul; so that a most excellent way to prepare for Communion, is to unite oneself to the priest and the Church by reading the Ordinary and Proper of the Mass.

Many prefer to follow the Mass by mental prayer and meditation, making fervent acts in keeping with the various parts of the Sacrifice, but younger persons, as yet unaccustomed to this, may find it easier to curb the restlessness of the imagination by fixing the attention on the printed page, adding from time to time ardent aspirations of love, humility and petition.

Should it happen that one receives outside of Mass, at least a quarter of an hour should be spent in suitable prayers and acts of devotion preparatory to the entrance of the Lord Jesus into his heart. To sum up the chapter, we may say, with the decree, that a becoming and sufficient preparation for Communion is required, according to the age and circumstances of the recipient, and the better and more devout this preparation, the more abundant will be the fruits of the Communion. And the excellence of this preparation, remember, depends far more on its intensity of love and fervor than on the length of time given to it.

CHAPTER XIII

AFTER THE FEAST

AT the moment of Communion, our attention and devotion should be closely fixed on the Divine object of our affection, and every effort made to keep away distractions. In this we can the more readily succeed, if we strive to realize that God is now within us, and a radiant host of ministering angels are hovering about us.

And how shall we address our heavenly visitor, what words shall we speak to Him? Can His ear, attuned to the chant of angels, listen to the barbarous accents of human speech? Words are not really needed, they fail before the emotion of a love-charged heart, which knows a language all its own, heaven-taught and understood only of lover and Beloved.

But, to be practical, we may learn from the saints many ways and devices of making our thanksgiving fruitful. First, we may offer to our Divine Guest all we have and are, praying Him to abide as owner of our soul and body, to consider as His own our will, memory, understanding and five senses, only deigning in return to lend them to us for hallowed use and trust. We may ask Him to exchange hearts with us, so that He may love what we love, and we may find delight only in what pleases Him.

As a child to its father, we may confide to Him our

hopes, desires and aspirations, and disclosing our trials, difficulties and temptations, throw ourselves into His protecting arms, where we shall be safe and secure from harm.

Then we may become beggars at His feet, empty-handed, clad in rags and entreating an alms from His munificence. Acknowledging His power to change pauper into king, let us make known our extreme poverty, our lack of virtue, our utter helplessness and need, and beseech Him to adorn our soul with every gift that may make us worthy of His presence. And now is the time to ask favors for all who are dear to us, parents, friends and teachers, to pray for the Church, the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of His elect. Let our life-long petition for ourselves be that we may not put any obstacle in the way of His grace, and that we may accomplish in this life the work Providence has allotted us to do. Let us not fear to ask too much, for we cannot exhaust God's treasure-house, and the more we ask, and with the greater insistence, the more is He pleased.

We can vary our colloquies of affection in other ways, by addressing Christ as the great and all-powerful physician, who by His mere word can restore to us the flush of health. Let us expose to Him all the diseases of our soul, our pride, vanity, selfishness and sensuality, our laziness and weakness of will, asking Him to apply to them the touch of His healing hand.

Then, turning to Him as our most intimate friend, we may unfold secrets that we can scarce trust or bring ourselves to breathe to any earthly being. There are depths in the soul which friendship of earth,

even the most close and sacred, cannot reach or understand. But Jesus will sympathize with us in everything, great or small, will enter into all our hopes and fears. Let us ask for present help and future guidance, and offer to make any sacrifice He may be pleased to require of us, even going so far as to petition for trials and suffering, that in them we may show our love and fidelity and the more resemble Him who suffered so much for us.

Holy persons also teach us to make use at this sublime moment of the sacred wounds in the hands and feet and side of Our Lord, asking by the merits of each some particular virtue or gift, faith, hope, humility, final perseverance, obedience or charity. Or in each wound we may place some special person or class of persons, our parents, friends, sinners, infidels, the Church, reserving for ourselves the refuge of His Sacred Heart.

When our devotion begins to flag, we can have recourse to a good prayer-book, reciting the prayers after Communion. And here comes the practical question, how much time should we spend in thanksgiving. One is prompted to reply, as long as we feel devotion, since these are precious moments not to be wasted. Still we must remember that young people have their duties to perform both at home and school, and not even the promptings and allurements of piety must be allowed to interfere with duty.

A good working rule for the length of thanksgiving is a quarter of an hour, whether computed from the moment of Communion or from the end of Mass. If any find this too burdensome, they

should at least endeavor to spend five or ten minutes in prayer after Mass, for the graces and favors to be obtained at this time are beyond all we can imagine. But as there is no real obligation for a communicant to remain after Mass, a young person who is willing to practice daily Communion and yet is loath thus to prolong his thanksgiving, should not for this reason be dissuaded or discouraged from approaching the Holy Table.

The time well spent from the Communion to the end of Mass will do much to purify the soul, and Almighty God does not require long prayers from the young. He is satisfied with innocence, good will and short prayers, if only they are fervent; and we may hope that the Holy Spirit will gradually increase and develop in them a sense of maturer piety and devotion.

CHAPTER XIV

"LORD, I AM NOT WORTHY"

MANY a young person, innocent and devout, is deterred from frequent Communion by the fear of his own unworthiness. He reasons within himself: "How can I, who am guilty of so many faults and negligences, so slothful in the discharge of duty, and prone to the good things of earth, how can I dare approach the God of all purity and perfection, and receive Him daily within my breast? To merit such a privilege I should have the holiness of a seraph or a saint, and I am neither."

This is a sentiment natural and, within bounds, creditable to the soul, and one felt by all the saints; but when invited pressingly to the embraces of Infinite Love, we must beware of turning away, through any motive however praiseworthy in itself. Humility is a great virtue, but it is not the only one. Childlike confidence, trust and docility also have a claim on us, and when united with a lowly esteem of self, make us surpassingly dear to the Heart of Our Saviour. The Blessed Virgin knew herself infinitely unworthy of becoming God's Mother, yet this did not prevent her accepting this sublime dignity when proffered by the angel.

Deep too was the humility of the Canaanite woman, but it did not prevent her begging at Jesus' feet for the cure of her daughter. Receiving the crushing

reply: "It is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs," she only urged with greater insistence: "Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." This humility, combined with faith and confidence, Jesus could not resist, and He paid her the glowing tribute: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt," and in that hour her daughter was cured (Matt. xv: 22-28).

Why did Christ institute the Eucharist? as a reward of virtue, or to produce it? Listen to the decree, which tells us that "the desire of Christ and the Church for the daily Communion of the faithful, . . . is not principally to secure the honor and worship of the Lord, nor to make the Sacrament, as it were, a reward or recompense of the virtuous;" but "chiefly that the faithful may draw strength from it to resist their sensual passions, to wash away daily faults, and prevent those graver sins to which human frailty is liable."

Here the saying of St. Augustine, "Because you sin daily, communicate daily;" which the Catechism of the Council of Trent tells us expresses the sentiment of all the Fathers who have written on the subject, is very appropriate. The argument of the holy Doctor is, that frequent minor offenses, instead of deterring from frequent Communion, afford the best of reasons for it. Pursuing his line of thought, we may add that the more frequent and serious our venial lapses, the more urgent is the need of their daily remedy—Holy Communion.

But surely, some one may object with the Jansenists of the past, the greatest reverence and honor

are due to the Blessed Sacrament, and how shall this be secured, if admission to it is thus thrown open to the many? They who reason thus forget that all the sacraments are instituted for men, and just because they are men beset with human frailty and imperfections. Were men angels, they would not need sacraments nor sacramental symbols. Hence, to secure reverence was not so much Christ's object in instituting them, as to benefit souls.

In fact, had Christ aimed principally at securing adoration and worship in instituting the Sacrament of the Altar, would He have chosen such lowly symbols as bread and the juice of the grape? What is more common and ordinary than bread? Does not then the action of Divine Wisdom, in selecting it for the matter of the Eucharistic Sacrament, lead us to surmise that as bread is not a luxury in the household, but an article of daily necessity, so too the Bread of the Altar is meant primarily for the daily use and nourishment of the soul?

Neither is mere bread considered, in the common estimation of men, the special reward of merit or exertion. Money and jewels, broad acres, herds and flocks, are reckoned among the material prizes of earth; but bread, never. Bread is the common dole of all, the babe in arms, the fettered slave and the knight who is blazoned with many a trophy.

Must we not then rightfully conclude that in hiding His Divinity, nay even His humanity under the appearance of bread, Divine Wisdom desired to entice all to approach Him without dread, or timidity? Who would be daunted or fearful in the presence of a tiny wafer? Evidently Jesus had no intention to

repel from Him all but the holiest; but rather to attract all, that He might make them holy.

Let us then take care not to refrain from Communion on account of excessive or false humility. We remember how, in the parable of the supper, the invited guests declined to come on a variety of pretexts, one because he had bought a farm and must go out to see it, another because he wished to try some newly acquired oxen, and a third because he had just married a wife. The master of the feast, growing angry at these frivolous excuses, resolved that none of these ungrateful guests should taste of his supper; and we too must beware lest vain and trifling reasons keep us from the Lord's Supper, and draw upon us the reproach of Him who said: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi: 54).

CHAPTER XV

"PEOPLE WILL TALK ABOUT ME"

MORE than one young friend, to whom the writer suggested frequent Communion, has replied in the words that head this chapter. "No one in our parish now receives Communion daily," such a one will object, "and if I begin, others will remark me and perhaps make comment on my general conduct, especially if they think it not in keeping with the frequency of my Communions." Another will express the same thought in the words, "I am not a saint, and I do not wish to pose as one."

As explained in the last chapter, daily Communion is meant for sinners as well as saints, and the fact that a person practices it, is not necessarily evidence of great sanctity, but only that he has an earnest desire of becoming pleasing to God. This whole objection springs from human respect, to which the young are just as subject as grown people and perhaps more so. It is the old story of moral cowardice, which, hindering us from doing right to please God, impels us rather to omit the good or do wrong in the hope of pleasing men.

Young people cannot learn too early to be independent of the judgments of men, and to follow the dictates of conscience and grace, irrespective of what others may say or think. We must begin in childhood

to build up a strong character, choosing rather to lead in well-doing than to follow the beaten path in servility to the opinions of others.

People will gossip about us anyhow, no matter what we do, and we may as well give them the chance to say something good about us as something unfavorable. The doctrine of Jesus is clear and pronounced on this point. "Every one therefore that shall confess me before men," He tells us, "I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. x: 32). And again He says: "He that shall be ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty" (Luke ix: 26). If then we do not wish Christ to be ashamed of us, neither must we be ashamed to practice what He teaches.

Words too are but harmless feathered shafts, without barbs, that hurtle through the air, and do not injure even if they strike us. What is said about us has no sting to it; it is rather a forced tribute of admiration to our courage and fearlessness. The feeling, too, we have of being noted and criticised is often only the creation of our own sensitiveness; the good people who see us being in reality highly edified and delighted at our piety. And besides, if we show the way, others may be encouraged to imitate our good example, which will be the best possible thing that could happen both for them and for us.

And which would you rather have—the admiration of men or angels? It was revealed to one of the saints that the inhabitants of heaven take special delight in a soul after Communion, coming to congratulate it, as a bride on her wedding day. Heed not

then the fickle comment of men, which lauds to-day what yesterday it flouted, but when your Saviour calls, run to His embraces as a child to its mother's arms, recking naught what the world may say.

Here we may consider a remark sometimes made, that it is better to train the young only to what they will likely keep up in after life, and as grown people seldom aim at more than monthly Communion, so this too should be the limit of frequency for the young. This evidently unsound argument for infrequent Communion is not worth more than a passing notice, as, if logically carried out, it would kill all youthful generosity and enthusiasm.

Moreover, great numbers of grown people receive weekly and even daily Communion, and the more this habit is fostered in the young, the more it will flourish amongst those of advanced years, according to the words of Holy Writ, "As the days of thy youth, so also shall thy old age be" (Deut. xxxiii: 25). Habits of virtue acquired in tender years will endure in riper age, and should the soul unfortunately experience a season of spiritual coldness, the memory of happier days, combined with the waning of earthly attractions, will be a constant incentive to return to its primitive fervor.

CHAPTER XVI

"IT IS HARD TO RISE EARLY"

IF SOME young people and older ones, too, were more honest, they would candidly admit that the real reason which keeps them from daily Communion, is the difficulty of rising early and going fasting to the church, especially on a nipping or rainy morning. How much pleasanter, to be sure, to remain cozily under the blankets, until a hot breakfast is ready, than to face the cutting wind and make one's way to the church through snow drifts or gusts of rain!

The country lad and lassie who are frequently prevented by distance from receiving daily Communion, at least give good example to their city cousins on the point of early rising. In summer at the first grey streaks of dawn, and in winter by the light of the stars long before the rising of the sun, the country boy is up and at his chores, feeding the horses and cattle, milking the cows, and carrying firewood. Two hours of work before breakfast, then a hurried wrapping, and the long tramp over muddy or frosty roads to school.

What our red-cheeked country children do so cheerfully at the bidding of their parents, city and village children should, one would think, be willing to do for God and the benefit of their own souls. To waste time lying abed of a morning, when all nature is awaking

to the praises of the Creator, seems little short of criminal.

Up then, my young friend, when you are called, or the alarm goes off. There is One, who has been thinking of, and guarding you, through the watches of the night, and now He is waiting for you at the church, to come and receive His blessing on the work of the day. The Scripture tells us there is a time for all things (Ecclesiastes iii), a time of war and a time of peace; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and even a time to dance; and so there must also be a special time to pray, as the Psalmist tells us, "to Thee do I watch at break of day" (Ps. lxii: 1). Let us heed the words: "In the morning I will stand before Thee" (Ps. v: 5), and join our voice with that of all living creatures in sending a chorus of praise to the Lord, Our God.

CHAPTER XVII

"I MAKE NO PROGRESS"

HE OBJECTION to frequent Communion is sometimes made: "Although I receive daily, I seem to make little or no spiritual progress, I lack fervor, commit petty faults, and so I begin to doubt its advisability for me." To a person who made this complaint, a confessor once said: "How long have you practiced daily Communion?" "A year," was the answer. "And during that year have you committed a mortal sin?" "Oh, no, I hope not." "Well," said the priest, "if daily Communion keeps you from offending God mortally for a whole year, it would seem to have great efficacy in your soul."

What would you say to one who would complain, "I do not notice any increase of weight or strength in my body, so it is evident my food is of no benefit to me, and I will stop eating"? No doubt you would reply: "As long as your health is good, it is a sign that your food is keeping up your vitality and strength, and so doing what it is intended to do. Cease eating for only a short time, and your body will become the prey of disease." In the same way, if our Communions preserve the vitality of our souls they are certainly doing much for us.

"But when I abstain from Communion for a con-

siderable time," such a person may insist, "I feel greater fervor, which would seem to be an indication that less frequent Communion would be better for my devotion and spiritual progress." Retaining the comparison of our last paragraph, we might rejoin that one who fasted several days would no doubt have a ravenous appetite for food, but it would not follow that his health would be benefited in proportion to his increase of appetite. One who takes moderate and regular meals will certainly, as a rule, have better digestion and more vigorous health, than he who eats only twice or thrice a week. In like manner, one who communicates daily, will as a rule be better nourished spiritually than if he were to receive only once a week or a month, even if he has not the same sensible devotion.

The remedy for one who feels sluggish and torpid at Communion is not to remain away, but to bestir himself to greater devotion in its reception, to pray more fervently and be more vigilant in avoiding faults. There is one marked difference between the Eucharist and common bread, as we are told by the Catechism of the Council of Trent: "It is not, like bread and wine, changed into our substance, but in some measure, it changes us into its own nature, and to it we may apply these words of St. Augustine: 'I am the food of the grown; grow and thou shalt partake of this food; nor shalt thou change me into thee, as thou dost thy corporal food, but thou shalt be changed into me.' "

This manner of speaking, which is common to the Fathers and theologians, does not mean that man's substance is changed into God's, but it signifies the intimate union of charity between Christ and the soul

effected by the Eucharist, and also, according to Cardinal Franzelin (de Eucharistia, pars 1, thesis 19), a "peculiar relationship by which Christ the spouse considers the flesh of those who worthily eat His body and drink His blood, as His own flesh by a special title." And thus the communicant can apply to himself the words of St. Paul: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii: 20).

While, then, there can easily be a surfeit of ordinary food, which happens when a person takes more than he can digest or assimilate, there cannot be a surfeit of the Eucharistic food, whose action in the soul is entirely different.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARVELS OF THE EUCHARIST

ITH the view of increasing devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist, it may be permitted to narrate some striking occurrences, which are vouched for by reliable witnesses.

On May 11th, 1907, a motherless child, not quite four years of age, named Nellie Organ,* was brought to the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Cork, Ireland. She was afflicted with curvature of the spine and consumption, but she bore all her sufferings with the greatest patience; and when they became most acute, holding a crucifix in her hand, she would kiss it and whisper, "Poor Holy God."

So much intelligence of spiritual things did she show, that the nuns were overjoyed, when the Bishop informed them he was coming to give Nellie the sacrament of Confirmation. The reception of this sacrament developed in the child an even keener sense of the spiritual, and especially of the Blessed Eucharist, so that an intense hunger and longing to receive Communion took possession of her. Her constant prayer became, "Give me the Holy God. I wish the Holy

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*See "Little Nellie of Holy God," by a Priest of the Diocese of Cork.—Mission Church Press, Boston.

God. Oh, when will He come to me? I wish it, oh, I wish it."

These soulful pleadings so moved the Sisters, that they informed a Jesuit father of the wonderful child and her great desire. He questioned her closely and came to the conclusion that in regard to the knowledge and understanding of the Eucharist, she had arrived at the use of reason. The Bishop, being informed of this opinion of the priest, gave consent for the child to make her first Communion.

This decision brought joy to the whole convent, and "Nellie of Holy God," as she is called on account of the expression which was so frequent in her mouth, being now four years and three months of age, was carried in her nurse's arms to the chapel, where a hush of reverence and awe fell upon all, as the priest approached the little figure, who awaited silent, motionless and with bowed head, the coming of her Lord. After the Mass, the child lay, all day long, in her little cot, making her thanksgiving and softly praying with joined hands, to "Holy God." Thirty-two times in the less than two months preceding her death, she received the Bread of Angels, and her thanksgiving, which at times resembled ecstasy, lasted several hours. Some considerable time after her death, her body was found incorrupt and her fingers flexible, and it is said that numerous favors have been obtained through her intercession.

In the life of St. Catherine of Sienna, an incident is related by her confessor, Father Raymond of Capua. One morning the companions of the saint objected to her communicating, as it was late, and they feared

her accustomed ecstasy after Communion might detain them too long, since they would have to wait to lock the church door. Father Raymond proceeded to say Mass, not even knowing that Catherine was in the church, as she was far from the altar. At the first breaking of the Host, It divided into three fragments instead of two. One particle he saw descend toward the corporal, but on looking for it, he could not find it. After Mass he again resumed his search for the missing particle, but without result. This distressed him even to tears, and later he disclosed his anxiety to St. Catherine, who said smiling, "You will never find it."

Seeing her so calm, he suspected some hidden mystery, and pressing her for an explanation, she said: "I yearned for Communion this morning, but being unwilling to cause others trouble, I resigned myself to God's will; and He Himself deigned to appear and give me the particle which you missed."

In the thirteenth century lived the famous Franciscan, St. Anthony of Padua, of whom many wonderful tales are told. On one occasion a heretic whom he was trying to convert said only a miracle would cause him to believe in the Blessed Sacrament; and the Saint, inspired, no doubt, from heaven, accepted the challenge. The unbeliever then declared that he would keep his mule fasting for three days, and on the fourth he would stand in the public square with his animal and a bag of feed, and if it left the feed to adore the Host, he would be convinced.

At the appointed time, Anthony, accompanied by a concourse of the faithful, carried the consecrated Host in procession to the public square, where he

found the mule impatiently sniffing at the fodder carried by its master. The latter then threw its meal before the animal, while Anthony commanded it in a voice of authority to come and adore its Creator in the Blessed Sacrament. The famished animal immediately left its provender, and kneeling down with bent head before the Host, remained fixed in that attitude. This marvel conquered the obstinacy of the heretic, who abjured his error, and thereafter lived a good Catholic.*

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*The Bollandists give as authority for this incident the Chronicles of the Order, as compiled by Father Luke Wadding.

CHAPTER XIX

BECOMING A EUCHARISTIC APOSTLE

WHEN we love a person, we delight in telling others of his virtues and charms. We want every one to know and admire our hero or heroine. And one who is enamored of his Eucharistic Lord should never tire reciting His adorable perfections to others, endeavoring to make them sharers in the blandishments which He lavishes upon His favorites.

Jealousy may insinuate itself into human love, as when we desire to appropriate the entire affection of a creature to ourselves. But in Divine love there is no room for so human a sentiment, since an Infinite Being has a boundless ocean of personal love and affection for each creature, and the more He bestows upon one, the more He has left for others. His love for each intelligent creature is as intense, as though it were the only one in existence.

One who falls under the spell of his Eucharistic Saviour longs to bring others under the influence of the same attraction. But how make new recruits, and increase the number of His votaries? A young person may think within himself, if only he were a priest, he could ever speak of the hidden treasures of Love, he could preach to men the pleasures and delights of self-devotion and sacrifice; or if only he were privileged to be a martyr, he could show his fidelity even

to death, after the example of the youth, Tarsicius, in ancient Rome, who died rather than betray to the enemies of the faith the Sacred Host which he carried upon his person. But, alack! what can simple boy or maid do in our times to bring others nearer to Christ?

And yet there are single-hearted young people to-day who are themselves daily communicants, and do much to win others to the service of their Lord. If you desire to get up a picnic or excursion, a game or a little charitable enterprise among your companions, do you not find the ways and means? And are you helpless, only when piety and deeds of pure charity are in question? The writer has known more than one group of young people to unite in a holy conspiracy to promote daily Communion in a class or coterie of fervent souls. Why not begin with one? Speak to your most intimate friend, and persuade him or her to join you in your holy practice. And two can attract two more, until the good work will spread like leaven in a mass.

Pius X apparently favored this apostolate of young people, for he indulgenced a beautiful prayer, whose object is to spread and promote the practice of daily Communion. It will be found at the end of this booklet. Begin by saying this prayer daily yourself; and then ask your teacher to have it said occasionally in class by all the pupils. If a person can once be induced to pray for the spread of daily Communion, he will certainly feel the impulse to begin the practice himself; and thus devotion to Holy Communion will extend in ever-widening circles.

Every Catholic school, too, should have some spiritual reading in common, say a quarter or half hour

each week. Surely this much time could be spared for that most important of all objects, the deepening of the spiritual life of the pupils or students. And there are most beautiful books for this purpose, on Communion, the lives of the saints, and similar topics, which all would find a pleasure in hearing or reading. Does that custom prevail in your school? If not, why not ask your teacher to introduce it, for probably she will only be too glad to do so?

Join, then, the "wide-awake club," and be alert to assist your neighbor and help him to be good. Unite with your companions and teacher, and endeavor by prayer, example and timely word to bring others to greater love of Our Lord in the Eucharist. Get your companions to drop into the church with you for a little visit, show them this little book and ask them to read it. St. Vincent Ferrer, when a little boy, used to gather his playmates and preach to them the sermons he had heard. At least imitate his spirit, and in your confidential conversations with others, try to draw them away from evil and toward what is good.

CHAPTER XX

SODALITY EUCHARISTIC SECTIONS OR GUILDS

ONE of the most efficient ways to promote daily Communion is by means of sodalities. Father Francis Xavier Wernz, the late General of the Jesuits, was an ardent advocate of this practice, and amongst the rules which he framed, in 1910, for all Jesuit sodalities, the thirty-ninth is worthy of special notice. In this he says that sodalists should consider the exhortation to daily Communion, which is addressed by the Church to all, as especially pertaining to themselves, and hence each should strive to practice it.

But he was not satisfied with this general direction. He desired that sections or guilds be established in Jesuit sodalities for various good works, intended primarily either to sanctify the sodalists themselves or to assist their neighbor (Sodality of Our Lady studied in the Documents, par. 477, 478, Mullan). These sodality sections have been in existence for many years, a notable instance being found in the great Sodality of Barcelona, where divisions exist for fostering piety amongst the sodalists, for visiting hospitals and distributing clothes, and for the spread of the faith, under which last section were managed boys' clubs, catechism classes, a school, lecture bureau, and home for working youths.

While these sodality sections are centuries old, it

remained for the Eucharistic section to receive the honor of the first express approbation of the Holy See. In a letter to the Very Rev. Rudolph Meyer, S. J., of St. Louis, dated November 28th, 1910, Father General Wernz reports an audience he had with Pope Pius X, in which he told him of the Eucharistic league or section which existed among the sodalists of various Jesuit colleges in the United States, whose members endeavored to assist at daily Mass, to receive Communion daily or at least three times a week, to make a visit once a day, as well as to induce others to the same pious practices. The Holy Father was so pleased to hear this, that he at once imparted to each and every member of these sections, and to their directors, a special apostolic benediction (Mullan, 2047, 2048).

Wherever these frequent Communion guilds or associations exist, they have accomplished wonders in drawing their members to closer union with Our Lord, in enabling them to lead innocent, holy lives, and spread the aroma of virtue about them. As intimated in the document issued by Father Wernz, the benefits of this section are not restricted to sodalists, but the members are expected to exert their influence on others. Father Mullan (par. 476) says that Eucharistic sections "add to the practice of frequent Communion that of drawing others to so holy an exercise."

This promotion of frequent Communion has now become one of the commonest works of modern sodalists (Mullan, par. 481). A Young Ladies' Sodality at Mosontarcsa in Hungary began by introducing general Communions, then Communions on every Sunday, with the result that the number of Communions in-

creased in the parish from four thousand six hundred and fifty in 1908 to ten thousand and fifty-six in eight months of 1910.

Young readers who belong to a sodality, where the Eucharistic guild is established, will do well to join it, and if this section has not yet been organized, perhaps a few words of persuasion on their part may induce their sodality director to take up this apostolic work.

CHAPTER XXI

VISITING WITH OUR LORD

WHEN the Franciscan Saint, Paschal Baylon, who was chosen by Pope Leo XIII, patron of Eucharistic associations, was a little child and before he could walk, he one day disappeared from home. His mother searched every nook of the house without finding him, and then almost distracted hastened into the streets, inquiring of every one she met whether he had seen her little Paschal. Finally she entered the church, where to her great surprise and delight, she found him sprawling on the altar steps, whither he had crawled; and there, oblivious of his surroundings, with eyes riveted on the Tabernacle, his little soul seemed absorbed in contemplation.

This saint began early his marked devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, in which he is a model to the young, and which led finally to his canonization. We all like to receive visits from our friends. Even tiny children enjoy the company of others of their own age. And Christ in the Eucharist has not lost His human nature. While on earth, He took pleasure in the company of His friends; He visited their homes, and sat at their table; He shared the glory of His transfiguration with His intimate apostles, and in His agony asked them to watch with Him.

In His Eucharistic existence, He still yearns for companionship, making Himself accessible at all times

to the most lowly and unfortunate. At any hour of the day, you can have recourse to Him in the Tabernacle, where you will find Him ready to commune with you in the outpouring of soul to soul, to listen to your sighs of love, your words of adoration, thanksgiving and petition. There are some religious orders which bind themselves by rule never to leave Our Lord alone in their chapel; but night and day some member of the community is always kneeling in silent adoration before Him.

How thoughtless we are to pass before the church or chapel door so often, without entering to pay our respects to the Prisoner of Love. It will not take long, only a moment or two, to genuflect before Him, and say that our heart is still true to Him. It is only a moment, but what a precious one; how glad He is to see us and what a sweet smile He bestows upon us, as He picks out from His treasure box some new ornament of affection to deck our soul. And as we pass out with reverence from His presence, His eyes follow us with fondest regard, never losing sight of us, until we return again.

But what shall we say to Jesus in our brief visits? It is not really necessary to say much, if only we gaze upon Him with tenderness. What depths of affection may be contained in the simple ejaculation, "My Jesus, I love Thee, I give Thee my heart and soul, I wish to be entirely Thine!" Say but this, and He will understand the rest. After all, words are but a poor envelope of love. Mother understands it all, when we desire to be near her, while we are studying or reading or working, even if we do not utter a word. Just to be in her presence is enough

to make us happy and content, and to have us by is sufficient for her maternal heart. Jesus, too, is satisfied when He sees us kneel before Him and give Him a look of affection, for He is quick to understand the language of love, even when not translated into words.

And what a splendid opportunity does the chapel visit give for spiritual Communion! How easy and sweet to say: "Jesus, come to me! Gladly would I receive Thee now in Holy Communion, but as this cannot be, I pray Thee, come spiritually into my soul, and make me love Thee more ardently and serve Thee better." This is a spiritual Communion, and the oftener we make it, a dozen, a hundred times a day, the better prepared shall we be for the actual reception of the Eucharist on the morrow.

Nor is it even necessary actually to visit Our Lord. When prevented by distance or duty from doing so, we can often turn in spirit while engaged at our work, to the nearest Tabernacle, and there offer Our Lord the homage of our adoration, and tell Him our soul is ever watching with Him, and desiring to receive Him.

In this you can imitate Blessed Margaret Mary, who, when forbidden in her childhood days to visit the Church, sought refuge in some remote corner of the garden or house, and there kneeling unobserved, poured forth her heart's affection with tears to God, begging the Blessed Virgin, her mother, to present her offering to her son.

CHAPTER XXII

CONFESSION

A VERY practical question with the daily communicant is how often he should go to confession. Every well-instructed Catholic knows that a mortal sin must always keep one from Communion, until he has first made a good confession. But if no grievous stain defiles the soul, there is no necessity of going to confession. The Blessed Virgin while on earth never received absolution; she was incapable of it, as she never committed the least fault, and yet it is piously believed that in common with the early Christians she was a daily communicant.

In practice, however, the most fervent Christians are generally found the most frequently at the tribunal of penance; for they realize better than others that this sacrament frees us from venial sins as well as mortal, and, besides giving an increase of sanctifying grace, affords many graces to avoid relapse in the future. Its effect is to give purity and delicacy of conscience; and where, for some reason, frequent Communion is impossible, confessors have found by experience that weekly or even more frequent confession serves to an extent as a substitute.

St. Philip Neri, that most lovable saint, had a penitent who was such a slave to a habit of mortal sin that he fell almost daily. The Saint gave him no

other penance, than to return to confession after each offense, without waiting for a second fall. The penitent obeyed, and kept coming back with his same story, until gradually falling less and less frequently, he became entirely freed in a few months not only from that sin, but from many others; and finally ended by attaining such holiness that St. Philip declared he had become an angel.

Such then is the force and efficacy of confession in itself, and the frequent communicant will be only too glad to take advantage of it, if for no other reason than to obtain that great purity of soul, which is so becoming for Communion. This purity of heart, confession produces partly by directly remitting venial sin. The Eucharist, it is true, also cleanses faults, but according to some theologians only indirectly, namely, by a copious infusion of actual graces which lead to ardent acts of charity by which venial sins are purged away. At any rate, all must admit that the greater the purity of the soul before Communion, the more intense will be its results, and this better preparation is certainly secured in a sincere confession.

Can then a practical rule be given for the frequency of confession? It will probably be admitted that a daily communicant, who wilfully and without necessity postpones his confession longer than a month, deliberately deprives himself of an available source of grace. We should then endeavor to confess at least monthly. But penitents who desire the greatest purity of heart, will if possible, follow the custom of most religious orders and pious people, and endeavor to make a confession every week.

This practice of weekly confession has special advantages for the young, who in the course of a month might fall into a number of perplexing circumstances and doubtful sins, which, if disregarded, may give rise to anxiety, and even plunge them into the mazes of a doubtful or erroneous conscience. The frequent direction of a prudent confessor under such conditions, is advantageous to every one, and to younger persons sometimes even necessary.

Some preachers or writers may hesitate to recommend weekly confession for fear that the difficulty of practicing it may hinder daily Communion. They reason thus: "It is advisable for every one in a parish or school to receive daily, but, owing to the scarcity of priests and the engrossing occupations of the faithful, weekly confession is often impracticable; hence, if it be urged, timorous souls who cannot practice it will abstain from daily Communion; and moreover priests will be reluctant to promote frequent Communion for fear of being overwhelmed with confessional work."

Where such conditions exist, all, young and old, will have to be satisfied with monthly or bi-weekly confession. But at the same time there are many places, especially in the churches of religious orders, and in colleges and boarding schools, where confessors are numerous, or at least are not overburdened with work, and so every facility is offered for weekly confession. Where this is the case, it would seem only reasonable to encourage the young to take advantage of it.

As a special privilege of daily communicants, Pope Pius X, on Feb. 14th, 1906, issued a decree permitting

them to gain all the indulgences (except those of a jubilee), without the weekly confession which would otherwise be required, and this in favor even of those who omit the daily Communion once or twice a week.

Another instance of the trend of later Church legislation to favor frequency of Communion rather than of confession, is to be found in the decree of April 23rd, 1914, which allows all, even those who are not daily communicants or weekly penitents, to gain plenary indulgences for which confession is required, provided they have been to confession within the preceding eight days, and the confessor makes no objection.

Another admonition given in the decree on frequent Communion tells us, "that the practice of frequent and daily Communion may be carried out with greater prudence and more abundant merit, the confessor's advice should be asked." This does not mean, as some imagine, that the priest's sanction or permission must be obtained for each Communion. In fact the confessor does not give a permission at all, as none is needed by one who is in the state of grace. He merely sanctions or approves your communicating frequently, or perhaps under certain circumstances advises you to receive less often; and his approval may generally be presumed if you have obtained it on a previous occasion.

Most confessors like their penitents to tell them how often they have communicated since their last confession, as this gives them a better idea of the state of their conscience. If a frequent communicant al-

ways does this in confession, and the priest makes no remark, it may be taken as a tacit expression of the confessor's approval.

A PARTING WISH

And now, gentle reader, before closing these pages, take with you the writer's parting wish, that often receiving your Eucharistic God under the sacramental veil, in this life, you may merit, at the dawn of endless day, to see Him face to face, and be united with Him in the fullness of joy and glory FOREVERMORE.

PRAYER FOR SPREADING THE PRACTICE OF DAILY HOLY COMMUNION

O MOST sweet Jesus! Who didst come into this world to impart to all souls the life of Thy grace, and Who, to preserve and foster it in them, hast willed to become the *daily food* of their *daily* infirmity, we humbly beseech Thee through Thy Sacred Heart, burning with love for us, to pour out Thy Divine Spirit upon all souls, in order that those who, unhappily, are in mortal sin may be converted to Thee and recover the life of grace which they have lost, and that those who by Thy help are already living with this Divine Life, may, when it is possible for them, approach Thy Holy Table every day; so that *daily* receiving in Holy Communion the antidote of their *daily* venial sins, and *daily* nourishing in themselves the life of Thy grace, thus ever purifying their souls more and more—they may at last arrive at the possession of the life of Eternal Happiness. Amen.

Indulgence: a—Three hundred days if said once a day. b—Plenary Indulgence once a month if said every day for a month, provided you go to Confession, receive Holy Communion, visit a Church or Public Oratory and pray for the intention of the Pope.

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CASSILLY, F.
AUTHOR
Shall I be a Daily Communicar
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